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The

Other Press

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT SINCE 1976

Issue 20 Vol 32 March 1, 2006



***Peace Rally at the
Vancouver Art Gallery***

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March 1st, 2006



THE OP MUSIC CHARTS — Otherwise known as...
What we listened to during the creation of this issue:

Rogue Wave—Descended Like Vultures
Rogue Wave—Out Of The Shadow
Neko Case—Fox Confessor Brings The Flood

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The weekly deadline for submissions is
Wednesday for publication the following
Wednesday. Letters to the Editor, vacant sec-
tions, and "time-sensitive" articles (weekend
news, sports, and cultural reviews) will be
accepted until Saturday noon and can be sub-
mitted to the editor at: othereditor@yahoo.ca

All other submissions should be forward-
ed to the appropriate section editor. Please
include your name, phone number/email
address, and word count, and submit via
email as an MS Word.doc attachment to the
attention of the appropriate editor.

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who has contributed to at least two of three
consecutive issues. Those interested in join-
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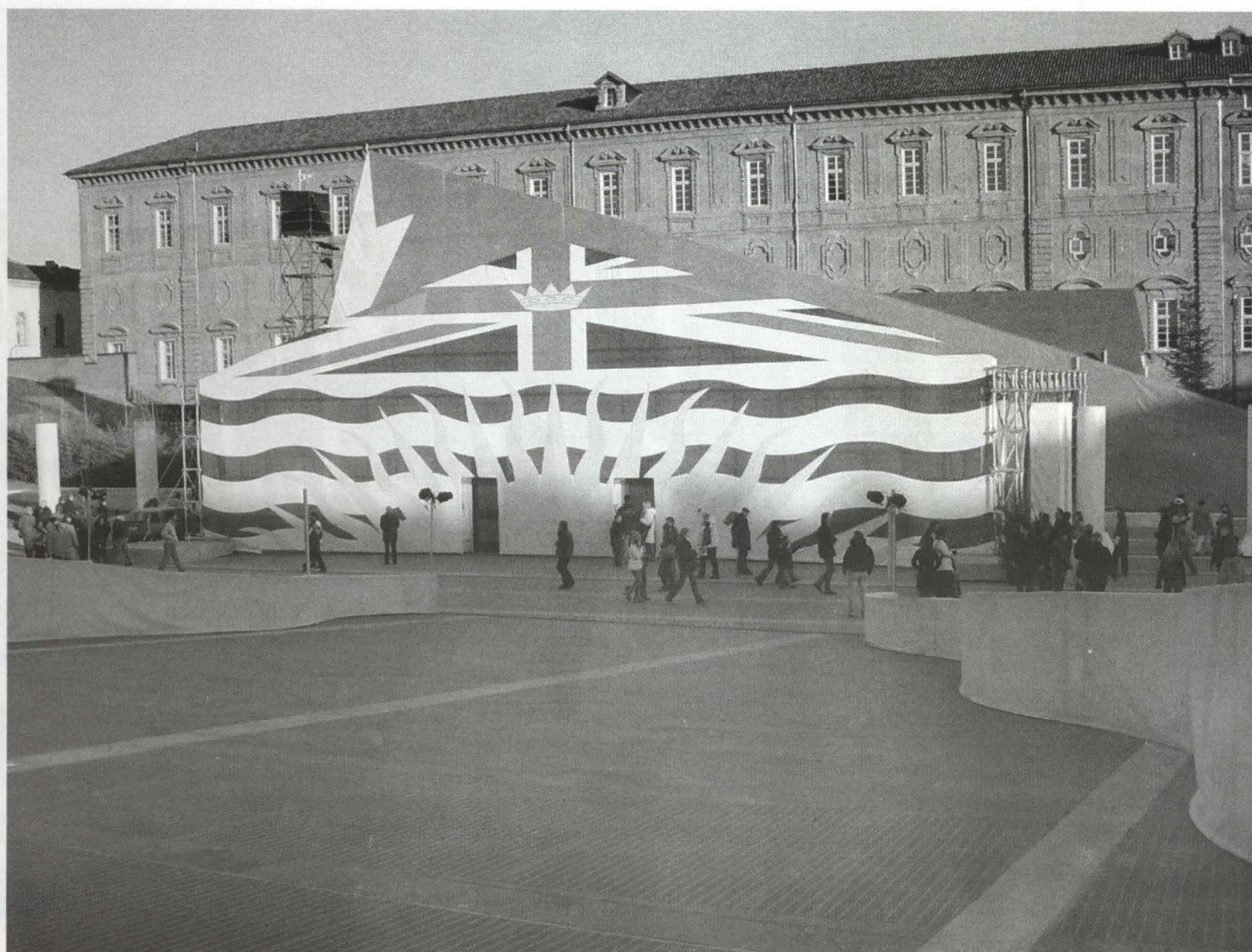
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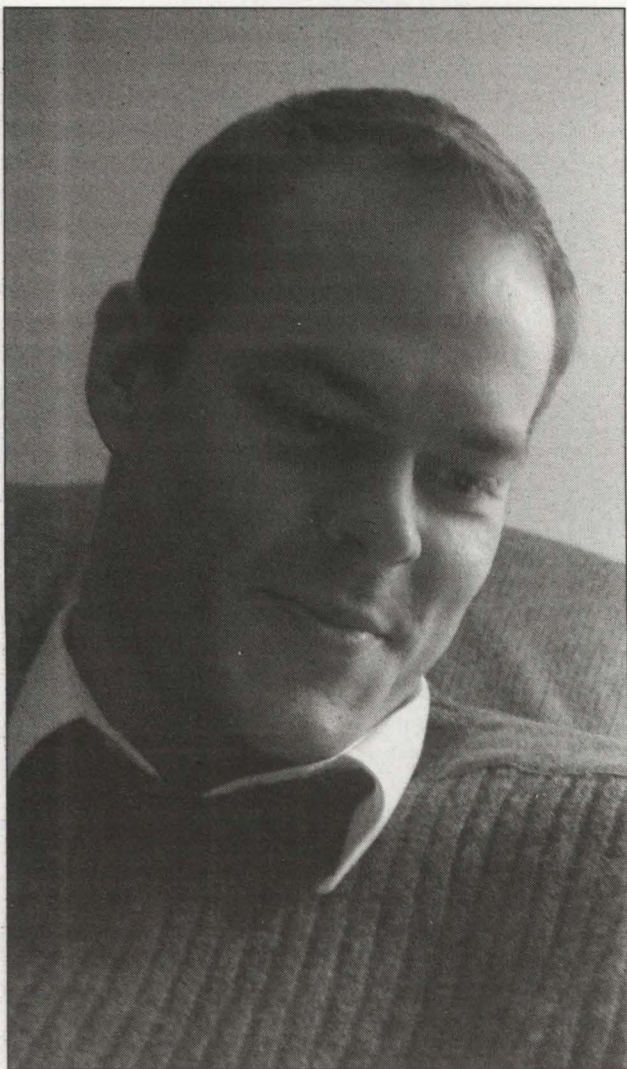
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"Racism is man's gravest threat to man—the maximum of hatred for a minimum of reason.

—Abraham Joshua Heschel

"The function of theology? The recitation of the incomprehensible by the unspeakable to pick the pockets of the unthinking."

—Robert Anton Wilson, *Nature's God*

By now, we've all heard several opinions and angles on the "racist comics" first printed by the Danish paper, *Jyllands-Posten*, and subsequently reprinted throughout both Europe and North America. The comics depicted the prophet Muhammad with a bomb worked into his head apparel.

I personally neither condemn nor support the comic in question. Some opinion, eh? Well, hold on there just a minute pardner. I think that the comic in question is racist. I also think that burning down the foreign embassies of people that happen to be from the country of origin of something you find offensive is totally heinous. And yet I find myself drawn to point out the obvious link between both the comic in question and the acts of destruction and violence perpetrated by certain factions of the Muslim religion: Racists and the fervently religious have more in common than they'd maybe like to admit. They each have a worldview that somehow segments one portion of humanity as "chosen," or "better," or even more so, "right."

Racism is founded on the idea that one culture or race is somehow superior to others. The radical factions of most major world religions seem to share the same belief, namely, that their particular religion is somehow serving a

"God that is the one true God."

Any person that actually believes that the race they happened to be born into is superior to any other race is a freaking idiot. Likewise, any religion that actually believes that their doctrines (including their name for "God") are somehow superior to other peoples' beliefs is bloody ridiculous.

In both cases—racism and radical religious practices—it quickly becomes clear that this idea of "superiority" drives actions that are designed to degrade or harm others. Basically, both sects of society want to bang their ideas against other peoples' ears until they hear them come out their mouths. Should their efforts to convince fall short, both sects too often react through violence, which, as Isaac Asimov said, "is the last resort of the incompetent."

But that's simply my opinion. I really don't expect many to necessarily agree with my opinion, and you know what? I also don't care if you do or not. I'm not a religious zealot. I'm also not a racist. These are the decisions I've made in my life, for me and me alone. If you are a racist or religious nut, please, when you see me coming, save your crap for someone who gives a shit about it. Just remember, anybody that thinks they've got the market cornered on "the way things *really* are" is likely a freaking ass. And as for trying to talk any sense into people of these ilk? It's about as procreative as trying to talk a horse into not farting.

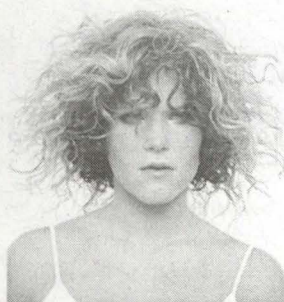
Now that we're done with all that gibberish, enjoy March's first Other Press. As always, it's mmm mmm good.

—Colin Miley, Managing Editor

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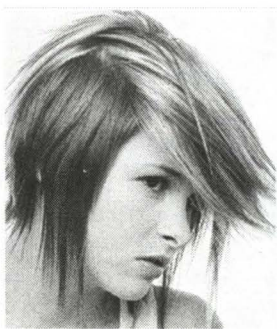


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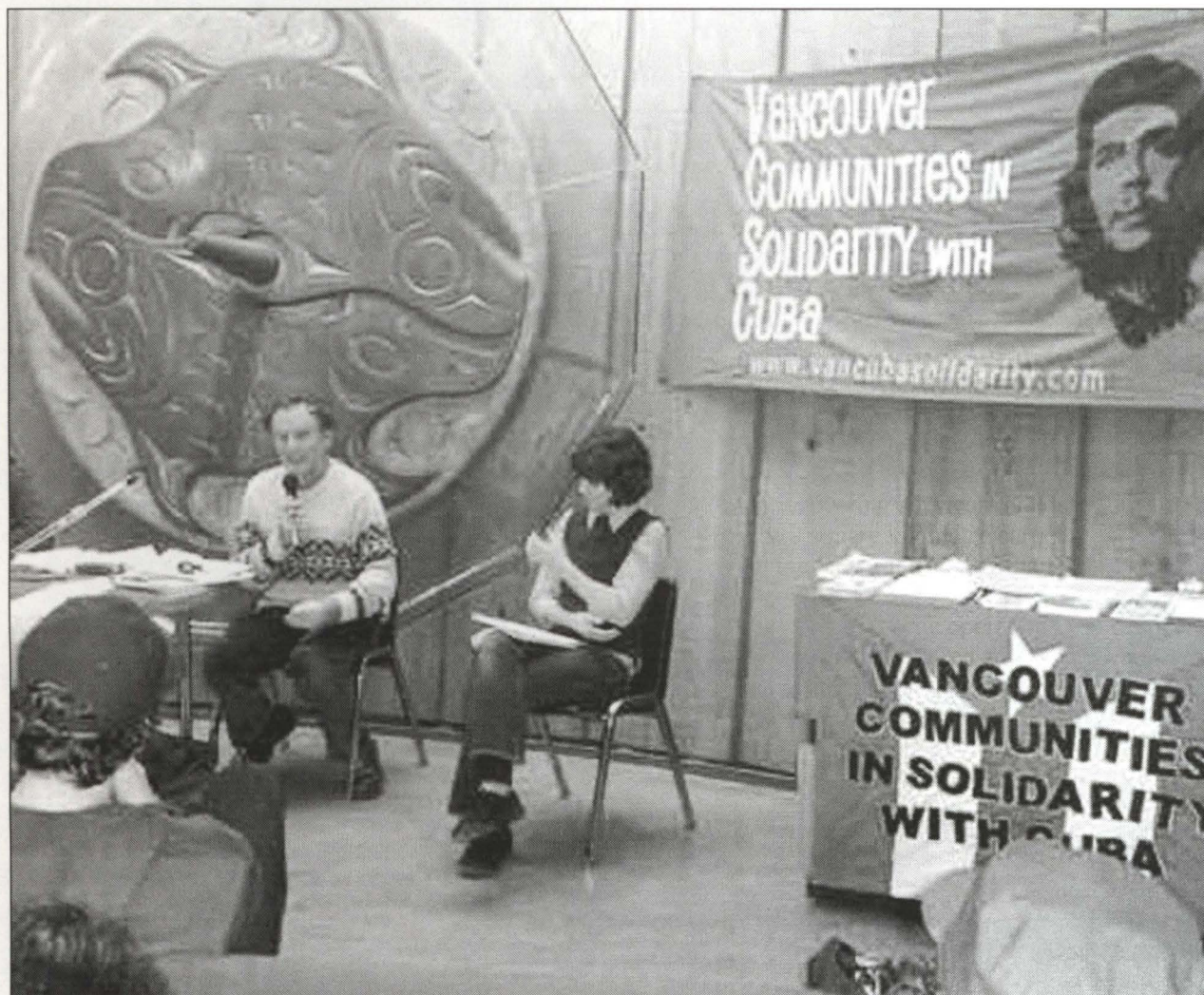


Sports 17

Battling the US Blockade on Cuba

Pastors for Peace coordinator visits Vancouver

Nicole Burton, News Editor



Two weeks ago, Pastors for Peace Coordinator, John Waller, traveled on a successful speaking tour across campuses in the Lower Mainland to challenge one of the US government's longest legacies of foreign aggression: the US-imposed blockade on Cuba, a Caribbean island of over 11-million people and only 90 miles off of the US coast.

Waller spoke at forums organized by student groups and student unions at UBC, Capilano College, and Langara College, before culminating with an event at the Unitarian Church on February 18, co-organized by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and the Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Church.

News editor Nicole Burton had the opportunity to meet with Waller and discuss his speaking tour, his organization, Pastors for Peace, and the ongoing challenge to lift the blockade.

Other Press (OP): From your perspective, what is the US Blockade on Cuba and how does it affect the lives of the Cuban people?

John Waller (JW): Well first, we call it a blockade (as opposed to a trade embargo) because it's an attempt by the US to stop economic relations between any other country and Cuba. It tries to impose its laws on other countries, and at its heart, it's an attempt to starve the Cuban people by trying to deny them the ability to get food or medicines from elsewhere, in an attempt to make them suffer so much that the US will have its dream [come true] of Cubans revolting against the Cuban government.

In terms of international trade, it's only been partially successful; Cuba can still often buy many things from around the world, but there are still certain things like medicines made only by US pharmaceutical [companies], that you can't buy legally from anywhere in the world.

OP: How did Pastors for Peace come about?

JW: Philosophically, we're rooted in the tradition of Martin Luther King Jr. and the US Civil Rights Movement and use of non-violence and civil disobedience to challenge unjust laws. Our parent organization, the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organizing (IFCO) was founded in 1967. Pastors for Peace, a more famous project in IFCO, came about in 1988. In 1992, churches in Cuba who were in support of the Cuban revolution, approached us and asked if we would start sending caravans of aid.

OP: What role does Pastors for Peace play in supporting Cuba against the US Blockade?

JW: Our caravans to Cuba take a certain amount of humanitarian aid—about 60 to 80 tons of aid each year. The real point of Pastors for Peace is that we are changing US policy on Cuba. We're taking aid—and people—without US government permission. That's illegal under US law. Every time we cross the border we're saying to them, "We've broken your law—what are you going to do about it?" If they let us go, we say that, in a small way, we've put

a dent in the blockade, and if the [US government] tries to create problems, then we get all the publicity we can, and that also undermines their policy.

OP: From your speaking tour in Vancouver last week, what do you see to be some of the main issues raised around Cuba by people?

JW: Partly people wanted me to explain more in detail about how the US blockade on Cuba works. One example from Canada is how a Canadian company was selling water purification tablets to Cuba; that Canadian company was several stages removed from a US subsidiary; and although they didn't realize it, they were actually breaking US law. So when a businessman from that company went to head office to work in the US, he was arrested! People are looking for examples like this of how the blockade really works.

OP: How can students and young people contribute in the fight to lift the blockade on Cuba?

JW: Going to Cuba, either as a tourist, on a work brigade, or on our caravan, supports Cuba economically, so every single person that goes is a little dent in that blockade.

Specifically about Pastors for Peace, we want to have Canadians coming and supporting us on the caravan—although it's primarily about US citizens, we will have people participating from Europe and Canada. If we speak to US audiences, we can show that even the US's traditional allies—like Canada and countries in Europe—do not support this blockade. Several hundred thousand Canadians go to Cuba every year freely, so why can't US citizens go?

It's also important to have international observers there for when we cross the US border from Texas into Mexico.

OP: How can students join the Pastors for Peace friendship caravan to Cuba?

JW: We welcome anybody who's in support of what we're trying to do, and can afford to come with us (this means paying the participants' fee, or finding people and organizations who are willing to sponsor them so they can participate!)

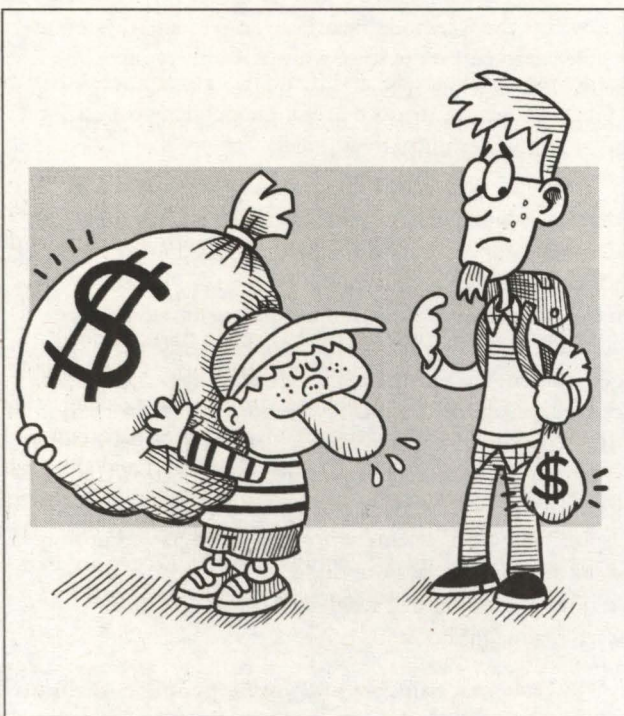
I'm one of the contacts for the caravan, so they can contact me. Also, if people are coming from the Vancouver area, they can contact Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), who we're working with here.

Apart from the people who go on the caravan, we want a lot of people to come to our border crossing at the US-Canadian border on Sunday, June 18. Because we will be taking aid from Canada through the US to Cuba, there's always the potential that US customs will try to deny us entry, and we want to have a lot of people there to show them that we can do it.

If you want to get on the Caravan or get more information about the Pastors for Peace, contact John at www.ifconews.org, by e-mail: cucaravan@ifco.org, by phone: 1.416.880.8377. You can also contact Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba at cubacommunities@yahoo.ca, or by phone: 778.882.5223. VCSC also has a website with more information at www.vancubasolidarity.com.

BC Budget Offers Little to Post-Secondary Students

Bryna Hallam, CUP British Columbia Bureau Chief



VICTORIA (CUP)—The BC government's new budget focus on children does not extend to post-secondary students.

Released on February 21, the budget "has some good news for students, but not a whole lot for students overall," said Lisa MacLeod, BC chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students.

Among the good news, said MacLeod, is an increase of about \$26 million in core funding and maintenance of a cap on tuition fee increases to the rate of inflation for the remaining three years of the Liberals' term.

"We were hoping for a reduction in tuition fees, but it's a good sign that they've made a commitment to this [the cap] and they've attached some funding to it," she said.

Tuition fees have nearly doubled in the province since 2001, when the Liberal government ended a six-year freeze on tuition fees. Average tuition fees in BC are \$4,874 for 2005-06.

The budget features a total of \$161 million new funds for post-secondary education over the next four years. Of that, \$145 million is additional operating funding to help create 25,000 new student spaces by 2010. The government is also focusing on increasing skills training.

"We have listened to the calls of industry to offer more creative incentives to encourage skills training," said Finance Minister Carole Taylor during the budget speech. "So today, Budget 2006 allocates \$90 million in tax credits over three years to encourage business to be part of the solution, and help government meet the challenge of training our workforce—in both our traditional sectors and emerging industries."

MacLeod acknowledged the need for more skilled workers, but said they were looking for "a more comprehensive strategy" to address the issue.

According to MacLeod, enrolment at colleges in BC has declined over the past few years, and completion rates of skilled trades and apprenticeship programs are down 44

percent since 2001—trends she attributes to increased tuition.

"I think it's a pretty clear parallel to draw," she said. "Tuition fees are going up, enrolment is declining, and so we really need the government to do something to create access."

Other groups, notably the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC (CUFA/BC) and the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC (FPSE), have echoed that view.

Cindy Oliver, president of FPSE, expressed her disappointment in the budget, saying "the most disturbing part of this budget for post-secondary students is the absence of any help for students."

CUFA/BC issued a report card on the government's post-secondary performance; they earned grades in the C to B+ range.

The group also criticized the government for its failure to develop an effective student financial assistance system to increase access to education, noting that despite increased funding, less money is going to student assistance now than in 2003-04.

On the positive side, they said the "future looks promising" in terms of creating more spaces for students. Other spending includes one-time investments to create a new World Centre for Digital Media Education and a new Natural Resources and Applied Science endowment. Funding for those projects totals \$50 million and \$40.5 million respectively.

Hundreds Rally in Vancouver Against Racist Cartoons

Shannon Bundock, OP Contributor

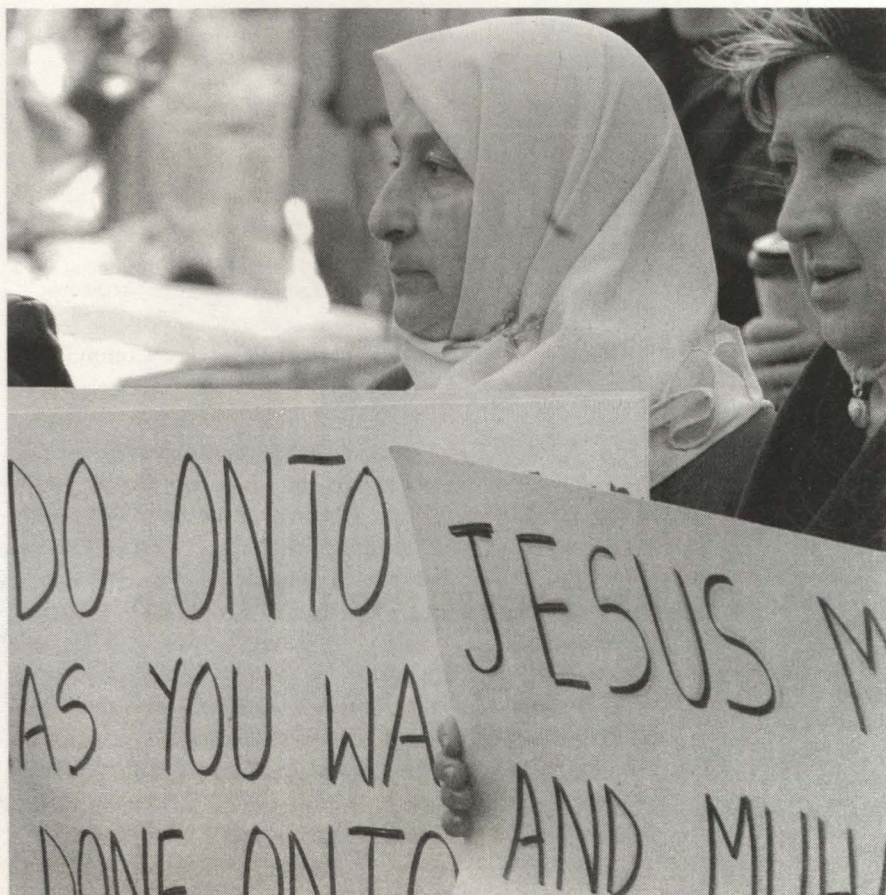


Photo by Jen Aird

"Downtown Vancouver was filled with the sound of Islamic chanting on Saturday as hundreds gathered to peacefully protest Danish newspaper cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad as a terrorist."

—Canadian Press, February 19, 2006

Over 400 people joined together on February 18, for a protest organized by several Mosques and Muslim organizations throughout the Lower Mainland, alongside the anti-war coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO).

The racist cartoons come at a time when the US is stepping up threats to Iran and is continuing to lead a brutal war and occupation in Iraq. At the same time, Canada is a leading force in the occupation of Afghanistan and Israel is continuing suppression and occupation against the self-determination of the Palestinian people. These attacks on Muslim people through Islamophobic propaganda are only one branch of the war that is wreaking havoc on numerous Muslim countries.

The resonant theme throughout the demonstration was one of unity of oppressed people—Muslim and non-Muslim—against the attacks. Speakers included Dr. Aziz Khakhi, a member of the Committee for Racial Justice,

Imam Ijazi from the Shia Mosque in Richmond, SFU student Brother Osama, Ivan Drury of Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), and Imam Fohd of the Zawiya Foundation. All of the speakers expressed their opposition to the cartoons as an attack on the dignity and honor of Muslim people.

"I am not Muslim. So why am I here?" asked Ivan Drury. "Well, I am here because in this era of war and occupation this racist attack is attempting to drive a wedge between oppressed people. We must unite with our Muslim brothers and sisters and stand against these cartoons and the forces behind them, as forces of division, forces of humiliation, degradation of dignity, and racist, hateful propaganda."

The rally gained wide media attention from around Canada, and was covered by CTV, Global BC, Canadian Press, and major Vancouver newspapers such as *Metro*, *24*, and *The Province*.

"We are protesting because we are hurt," said Dr. Khakhi. "We have been insulted. Our dignity has been lowered down. Freedom of the press does not include the right to insult religious sentiments."

"Bearing" our Spirit

JJ McCullough, Investigative Reporter



This week, Jon Wheelwright asks, "What's the deal with the Spirit Bear?"

On February 14, BC's Lieutenant Governor, Iona Campagnolo, read Premier Gordon Campbell's annual "Throne speech" in which he outlined the agenda of his government for the next year. Though most of the speech was standard political fare, one particular passage has prompted a fair bit of notice for its somewhat unintentionally irreverent tone. After making passing reference to the government's efforts to preserve the Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy in central BC, Campagnolo launched into something of a monologue on the Spirit Bear itself, finally declaring the beast to be "such a compelling symbol and such an inspiration that your government will act to make it our official provincial animal."

So what exactly *is* the Spirit Bear? Biologically speaking, they are actually somewhat of a freak of nature, not unlike a four-leaf clover or double rainbow. Most Black Bears in British Columbia, are (as we may expect) mainly black in color. However, the unique sub-species of Black Bear

known as the Kermode Bear have an odd and mysterious tendency to churn out pure white cubs every once in a while. These white babies have achieved something of a mythical status in First Nations' folklore, which explains the "spirit" designation.

How the bear ended up becoming BC's official mascot may be a slightly less magical story. For a while now, the Campbell administration has been engaged in a process which marketing people like to refer to as "branding." To make our province more interesting, memorable, and attractive to both tourists and businesspeople alike, the government has created a number of songs, slogans, ad campaigns, and PR events to promote a particular vision of BC. Most of these gimmicks, in turn, are based around a common motto, namely a promise to help spread "the spirit of BC." Thus, there was no way a bear with the word "spirit" right in his name was going to be passed up for some sort of official promotion.

Got a question that needs investigating? Email wart_mamu@yahoo.com

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One Cheer for Supreme Court Reform



Right Hook

JJ McCullough, OP Columnist

George W. Bush had to wait four long years before he got the chance to appoint someone to the United States Supreme Court. Though he's been lucky enough in the last few months to receive a double vacancy and install two new judges, overall, it was still a long and grueling wait for an already rare political opportunity.

In Canada, by contrast, Prime Minister Harper was barely in power a week before he got his chance to make a pick for the nation's top court. Justice Jon Major, who was originally appointed by Brian Mulroney back in 1992, announced his intention to resign shortly before the recent winter election, and in doing so automatically ensured the new Prime Minister would receive a very nice inauguration gift. While the American media gave much coverage to Bush's two recent Supreme Court nominees, and focused heavily on analyzing their likes and dislikes, agendas and ideologies, what's interesting about the Canadian coverage of Harper's picks is that the focus tends to be much more on *how* he chooses someone rather than *who* he ends up choosing.

The Canadian system of Supreme Court appointment has remained virtually unchanged since confederation. To explain the process in strictly constitutional terms, the PM essentially picks the person he wants. In the States, by contrast, all of the President's nominees must be screened by the Senate's judiciary committee, followed by a collective vote of the Senate itself. Both groups have the power of

veto.

The contrast between the systems of the two nations has not gone unnoticed.

For many years, there has been a strong populist opposition to the Canadian method of appointment—a case that was eagerly embraced by the former Reform and Alliance parties. Now that the former co-founder of the Reform Party is finally sitting in the Prime Minister's chair, there has been tremendous grassroots pressure for him to live up to his past rhetoric and implement some meaningful change regarding how the nation's high court justices are chosen.

His solution was revealed last week, and like much of what Harper has been doing lately, the end result reeked of heavy compromise.

The Prime Minister will still appoint a nominee as usual, but before he or she can take office, the judge will undergo a three-hour televised, public scrutiny by an appointed judicial committee consisting of Members of Parliament from all four parties. While the move is unquestionably ground-breaking by Canadian standards, it remains relatively thin gruel overall for those who wished to see greater democratic accountability for the high court's appointment process. The panel will not, after all, hold veto power—they won't even be permitted to formally state an opinion—and its members will be hand-picked by the Prime Minister's office.

Why Harper's reform proposal is so noticeably half-assed remains unclear.

The Prime Minister has personally been a longstanding opponent of judicial activism, and is no doubt well-aware of the positive checks and balances that can be gained from having the collective House of Commons veto prime ministerial nominees. The most obvious explanation for the cop-out is that Harper's own common sense has once again given way to political pragmatism.

For years, all sorts of elite collections of Ottawa bigwigs, the Canadian Bar Association chief among them, have routinely pooh-poohed any opposition talk of opening up the judicial appointment process, claiming all sorts

of cataclysmic consequences will result if the country embraces any sort of partisan, American-style proposal that potentially gives elected politicians veto power. If nothing else, Harper is a man who desperately wants to be liked.

Over the last few years, Harper has repeatedly tried to harmonize his policies with whatever the Ottawa establishment types are decreeing as the conventional wisdom of the day, be it on bilingualism, healthcare, abortion, cabinet appointments, or whatever else. Shedding his party's "radical" image has long been priority number one for Harper. Sadly, more often than not it's been the conservative radicalism of "democratic reform" that the new PM has been most willing to purge. Fully democratic Supreme Court appointment will now go the way of national referendums, MP recall legislation, and a triple-E senate in the vast graveyard of abandoned Reform Party promises of yesteryear.

Still, even this minor reform is better than nothing. For once, Canadians will actually be able to see a member of their Supreme Court speaking publicly on television, hopefully answering poignant questions about his judicial philosophy. The convention will be hard for any future Prime Minister to repeal; once we've heard from one judge we'll expect to hear from them all.

Underlying all the hysterics about Americanizing or politicizing our judicial system is an absurd myth—perpetuated by countless judges, lawyers, and law professors—that Canada's judicial branch of government is somehow a fundamentally apolitical establishment. Of course, until now there has never really been an objective way to test this theory, as even daring to ask judges simple political questions has been deemed too much of a taint on their magical aura of neutrality. Now that the nation's elected politicians have finally gained a visible role in the appointment process, a key piece of this phony mythos has been permanently chipped away.

It may not be a large victory, but with this Prime Minister, it doesn't look there will be many of those any way.

I Just Want To Live!

Protecting health care in Canada



Left Overs

Iain Reeve, OP Fella

The BC throne speech: a sack of puffed up lies aimed to quell the dissidence of an angry or apathetic electorate wrapped in a cloak of faux anonymity and worn out royalist traditions...or, a chance for the government to artfully

lay out their agenda in a coherent and grandiose way that will invoke inspiration in parliamentarian and citizen alike?

I don't know. To be perfectly honest I've never sat through a whole one. As with most things attempting to masquerade as in-depth policy statements, a bulleted summary is usually the best way to absorb the real meat of it.

And directly to the right of the first bullet in the recent BC throne speech: health care.

Yes, everyone's biggest hot button issue—largely because it's the one that makes sure we don't die from things like infected paper cuts—struck policy gold in Victoria as the government announced a whole slew of health care innovations that are...just swell.

The Campbell government intends to look at moving for change in the Canada Health Act to ensure optimum service, to go on fact-finding trips to Europe to investigate

other health care systems, and to allow citizens to "choose" the type of system they want—likely offering a choice between single or two-tier health care. Details as to the method of this choosing are unknown, though neither three-legged races nor milk drinking competitions have been ruled out.

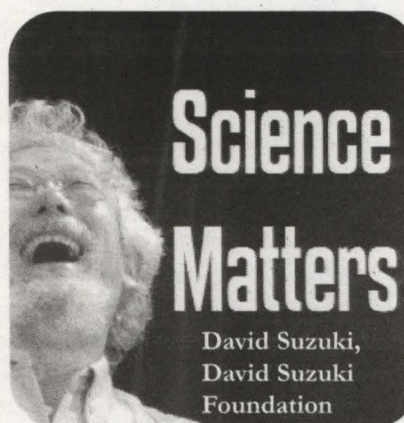
While there is very little in the speech that explicitly states it, the NDP, the media, and most onlookers have sensed a subtext in the government looking for ways to normalize privatization of health services. This is a debate that has raged strongly in Canada for some time. But even the most strongly inclined knee-jerk critic must admit that some of the benefits

are enticing.

Easing the load on the public system could shorten wait times for everyone. Increased financial benefits for doctors would stop the exodus of many to the American system. Also, there is some stock in the belief that private

"Matters of life and death should be kept separate from matters of profit and wealth."

Economy needs a better goal than "more"



It's one of those questions that drifts in the shadows of our modern world, just waiting to be asked: "How much is enough?" Yet few people do.

Under our current economic system, you can never have enough and you can never have too much. In fact, our entire economy is predicated on continued, endless growth. Yet we live in a finite world, with finite resources and a limited amount of space to dump our wastes.

Bit of a problem there.

In fact, right now, the standard measurement of human well-being is Gross Domestic Product (GDP), that is, the monetary value of all goods and services produced by a country. If the country's GDP is high, then well-being is considered high. If the GDP is stagnant or, god forbid, declining, then—regardless of other indicators—politicians go into crisis mode to "get the economy moving again."

Of course, one immediately wants to ask: "Where, exactly, is it going?" To which the answer is always: "Up!"

There is a good rationale for all this, in that economic growth is tied to jobs and income, which are indeed to a certain extent tied to well-being. But the GDP also includes things like cleaning up oil spills, clearing car accidents and treating asthma attacks brought on by smog. And it includes things like strengthening process efficiencies to "improve the bottom line"—which actually means laying off workers so shareholders make more money. Is that really good for well being?

Few people today seem to be asking the fundamental questions of: How much is enough? And what is an economy for? In post-WWII United States, consumption was seen as a way to make sure a wartime economy could remain in high gear in peacetime too. According to the Chair of President Eisenhower's Council of Economic Advisors, the "American economy's ultimate purpose is to produce more consumer goods."

So, this thing that pretty much rules the world and dominates politics at all levels; this thing that citizens are expected to submit to virtually without question and "help prop up" or "buckle down for" or whatever we are being told to do at any given time; the ultimate purpose of this thing that so controls all of our lives is to...create more stuff?

This seems beyond narrow minded—it's dangerous. It's putting us on a fool's path to disaster by distracting us from very real environmental and social problems by allowing us to shrug them off with a simple "what can you do? It's the economy!"

But we can do something. Our economy is a social construct and right now it's not working for us, we're working for it. We have no goal and without one, we will never be satisfied and never know when enough is enough.

According to ecological economist Robert Costanza, if you make the goal of an economy sustainable human well being, rather than growth, it allows you to consider a comprehensive suite of things that should be brought into economic decision making—things like the value of natural services, education and fulfilling employment.

Costanza groups these things into four types of capital: built capital, human capital, social capital, and natural capital. He contends that all of them are important elements of an economy and are necessary to examine if we are to ever get away from the single-mindedness of relentless growth.

We have a population expected to reach seven billion in the coming decade, a limited supply of natural resources, looming environmental concerns and an economy whose sole purpose is to produce more and more stuff. This is a problem. It isn't working and it's time to find something else for our economy to do.



Left Overs continued:

interests would increase the level of investment in innovation and invention.

However, at the end of the day, most realize that the embrace of this system is really about one thing: giving the rich the ability to pay to get faster service. It is about luxury, and it disrupts one of the few sectors of Canadian society which still enjoys an at least superficial degree of equality.

Most advocates of private health care claim that service for those using the public system would not decrease under a partly private system. This appraisal deserves a second look. Unlike Britain, where the public system is seen as considerably more prestigious, Canadian doctors seem, for the most part, to have embraced the financial benefits of private systems. Just like anyone else, they want to make more money and would be able to do so in the private sector of a two-tier system. As the best doctors, surgeons, and specialists would filter off to the private sector, those reliant on the public system would be put in danger by a domestic brain drain, just as debilitating as the one currently happening vis-à-vis America.

Beyond this, a purely public system is better enabled to ensure the quality of its care standards. It also removes from the equation a profit motive in matters of life and

death. The detrimental effect of such motivations can be seen in the stories of people in America who face death if they cannot afford operations or medication they require, or in the case of the developing world being held at the mercy of pharmaceutical companies, denying cheap generic versions of their drugs help those dying of treatable illnesses. Matters of life and death should be kept separate from matters of profit and wealth.

There are many areas of Canadian society where we feign equality. We are told anyone can go to school, become successful, and be happy. The grim reality of those born into poverty or with some manner of disability quickly denounces this as myth. We are told all people are equal before the law. However, everyday those who can afford expert legal representation are able to avoid punishment for all manner of transgressions while the poor are left with little recourse against the mistakes they have made. The medical system, accepted by most Canadians as the most important of all our social systems, is one opportunity to provide some level of equality to all Canadians. Nowhere else is this more important than in matters of life and quality of life.

Tales to Astonish: Astonishing X-men #13

Vince Yim, Yellow spandex wearing OP contributor



Joss Whedon, best known for his television creations *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, and *Firefly*, is currently tackling Marvel Comics' *X-Men* franchise with the ongoing series, *Astonishing X-Men*. Adding his trademark humour, dialogue,

and characterization, it has added a new dimension to some of our favourite characters, while giving the occasional shakeup.

By now, we're mostly familiar with the X-Men, a team of heroes that are born with superhuman powers that makes them feared and hated by the general populace. With 40-odd years of back-story to delve through, there have many popular storylines, such as *Age of Apocalypse*, *The Dark Phoenix Saga*, and *Days of Future Past*. So, is there anything left in the inkwell?

In the concluding pages of the last storyline, Emma Frost abandoned the team in the middle of a dangerous battle and was seen interacting with The Hellfire Club, a society of mutants with an evil agenda. As we learn that she was placed within the X-Men as a mole, it appears that her betrayal is imminent. However, the other members are too busy adjusting to other things to notice, such as the resurrection of Colossus, who mysteriously appeared after sacrificing his life to cure a mutant plague.

Thirteen issues in, Whedon proves that he has a solid handle on the characters, while adding his own personal touch. Admittedly, his characters do talk like characters from *Buffy* (indeed, Whedon admitted to basing Willow from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* on Shadowcat), although this isn't necessarily a bad thing. While the recent issue is decidedly light on action—the one action scene occurs off-panel—the story is building up to something huge.

While longtime readers will indulge, stuff like this can turn off new readers, which is an inherent problem to comic books with a long history. If someone were to, say, watch the *X-Men* movies and then decide to read the comics, the potential reader would be completely lost. While the cast of characters is familiar enough (Beast, Cyclops, Wolverine, Shadowcat, Colossus, Emma Frost), the characters change so rapidly that it's difficult for a casual reader to keep up. However, longtime readers would not have it any other way.

Still, Whedon and company make every effort to keep the casual reader in the loop, whether it be a recap page at the beginning of the book or flashback sequences. Once one is familiar with the storyline, it's easy to enjoy little moments like Wolverine teaching the younger mutants, or Shadowcat attempting to rekindle her relationship with Colossus. But for those that aren't as familiar with the characters, at least John Cassaday's artwork looks really nice.

Regardless, *Astonishing X-Men* is one of the better reads on the shelf today, although one may wish to read a few older issues before proceeding.

Astonishing X-Men #13

"Torn"

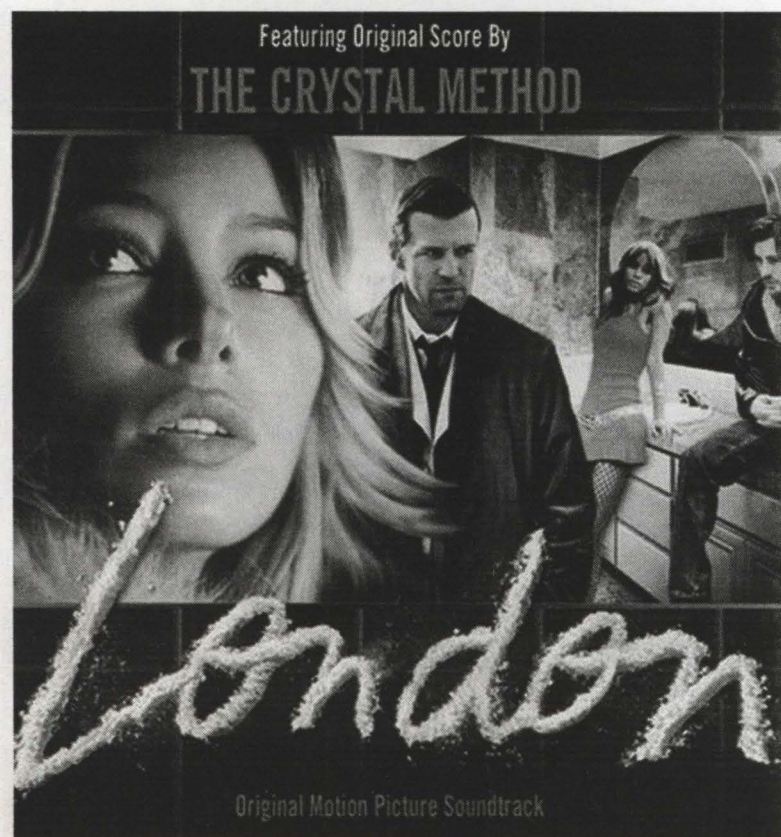
Story by Joss Whedon

Art by John Cassaday

Published by Marvel Comics

London: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack Tiny E Records/Sony Music

Vince Yim, OP Cagedancer



With *London: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*, techno duo The Crystal Method joins the ranks of electronic music artists that have composed movie scores, which includes the likes of The Dust Brothers (*Fight Club*) and BT (*The Fast and the Furious*, *Monster*). As one of the more successful American electronic music acts, their music has been featured in a long list of movie soundtracks and video games. Therefore, it's only natural that they'd be asked to score a film.

Something one should be aware of when approaching musical score soundtracks is that they are meant to coexist with the images on screen. The criteria for the music will be completely different than a stand-alone project, such as one of Crystal Method's previous albums. In addition, a lot more creative hands are put into the equation (for example, the film's director). So, with that in mind, one can expect that it will not necessarily measure up to their previous works.

Still, this is a listenable album, and it is still certainly a Crystal Method project. Fans will instantly recognize the style, partly because some of the tracks are reminiscent of previous Crystal Method tracks. For one, "Vice" is somewhat reminiscent of "Tough Guy" (from the 2001 release, *Tweekend*),

while "Defective" can be traced back to "Roll It Up" (also from *Tweekend*). Additionally, it is difficult to pick out a standout track, although it is safe to say that there is nothing memorable to the scale of "Busy Child" (from *Vegas*) or "Weapons of Mass Distortion" (from *Legion of Boom*).

In addition to the original Crystal Method score, there are some other guest musicians on the disc, including Evil Nine (whose work appears on the Crystal Method remix disc, *Community Service*), Troy Bonnes, The Out Crowd, and The Perishers. Adding some non-electronic sounds to the mix, they make the CD a lot more varied, which should be one of the goals of creating a soundtrack.

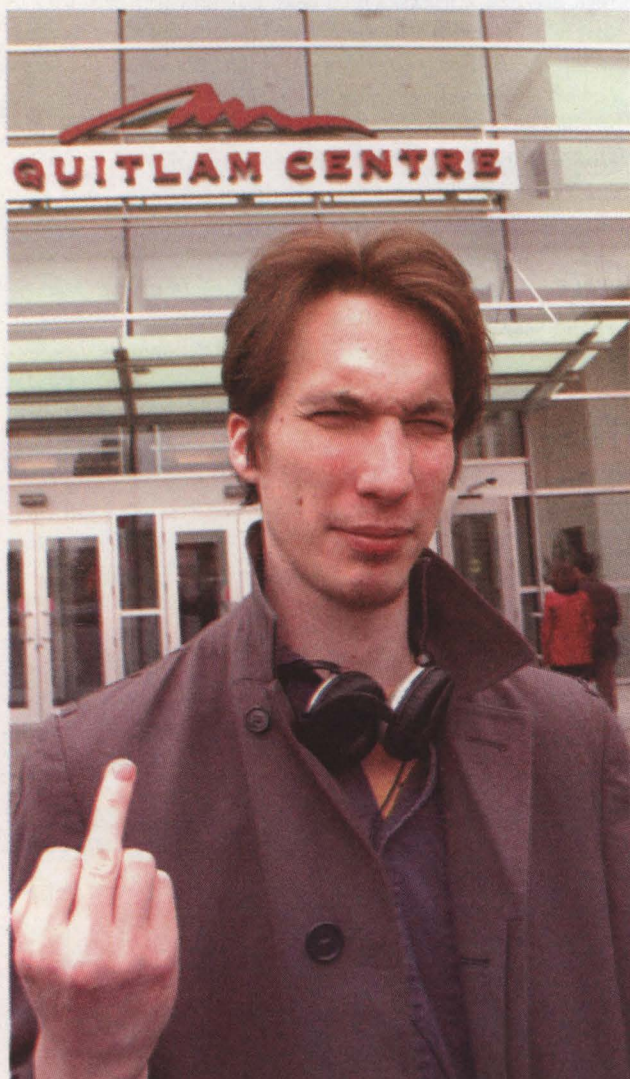
The word that sums up this CD is "functional." It fulfills its purpose, although once removed from its original function (i.e. separated from the accompanying images), it doesn't really fulfill its musical potential. Even still, it is a solid album, even though it would probably be best appreciated by Crystal Method fans or people who liked the film for which the score was composed. However, given the fact that *London* was only given a limited release, it might make it a little bit difficult.

COQUITLAM THIS WEEK

opfeatures@gmail.com

Coquitlam is Boring

By Brady Ehler, Coquitlam Rep., yet Vancouver Afficionado



I am sorry, fellow Coquitlamites (if there are any of you out there), but Coquitlam is boring. For a young man like myself, full of energy and looking for excitement, this town is boring as breadsticks. But then, is this any great surprise? Coquitlam is a place to raise your family, not a place to *live* in. I'm just going to come out and say it; Coquitlam is a hellish suburban wasteland. There, I said it, and I mean it too, damn it.

There isn't even a downtown in this "city." Sure, there is the commercial strip along North Road...but that's all it is, a strip, and a short one at that. Okay, well there is the mall, and it does encompass two or three square blocks, but despite what the road signs will tell you, a shopping mall doesn't constitute a downtown area.

I'm sure teenagers and old people like the place just fine; there is a skate-park, a pool, and vast expanses of trails on which to walk your twenty-year-old golden retriever with its cataracts and arthritis. There is the Evergreen Cultural Centre, where you can enlist your children in all sorts of thrilling programs, blah, blah, blah. What about *me*, damn it? This town has nothing for a young adults; there are no cool record shops, no anarchist book stores, and certainly no marijuana-themed cafes.

When I have free time and want to get out of the house, I grab my longboard (or as I like to call it, my skateboard for grown-ups) and head downtown. By downtown, I of course mean downtown Vancouver (where else). Where else but downtown Vancouver, can I skate around,

rush parkades, do the sea wall, and rip down Davie street at mach ten?

But downtown is not just a great place to skate; no, there is more! There are restaurants galore, of every size and shape, and get this; many of them are dirt-cheap! Ah, downtown, where else can I get freshly baked pizza for a dollar per slice? Where else can I get twenty pieces of sushi for five dollars? Where else can I get a burger and a beer for the same? Not in Coquitlam, that's for damn sure. It doesn't end with delicious, cheap food either, no, it is merely the beginning!

Coquitlam has quaint little trails, well, just outside of downtown Vancouver is Stanley Park, eat that Coquitlam. I know Coquitlam has two libraries, but neither of them compare to the massive awesomeness of the downtown library, a monumental piece of architectural art that encompasses an entire city block and boasts seven levels of delicious knowledge for public consumption.

What's that? You want to talk venues? Coquitlam has no real venues, and this is an infinite source of disappointment for me. Music fosters culture, which is something Coquitlam sorely needs to figure out. Downtown Vancouver is bursting with venues, including two, count 'em two, stadiums...ok, so stadiums are shitty venues for music shows, but they are great for sports! We all love hockey here don't we?

Alright, I don't expect Coquitlam to build a stadium anytime soon, but would it be so bad to have a bar that books real bands? Not that 40-year-old music teachers playing the hits every Saturday isn't thrilling and all, but how about some firkin' variety? Give me culture damnit! I want slam poetry jams and open-mics; I want weird secluded venues with tacky shit nailed to the walls; I want trendy

coffee shops and jazz music!

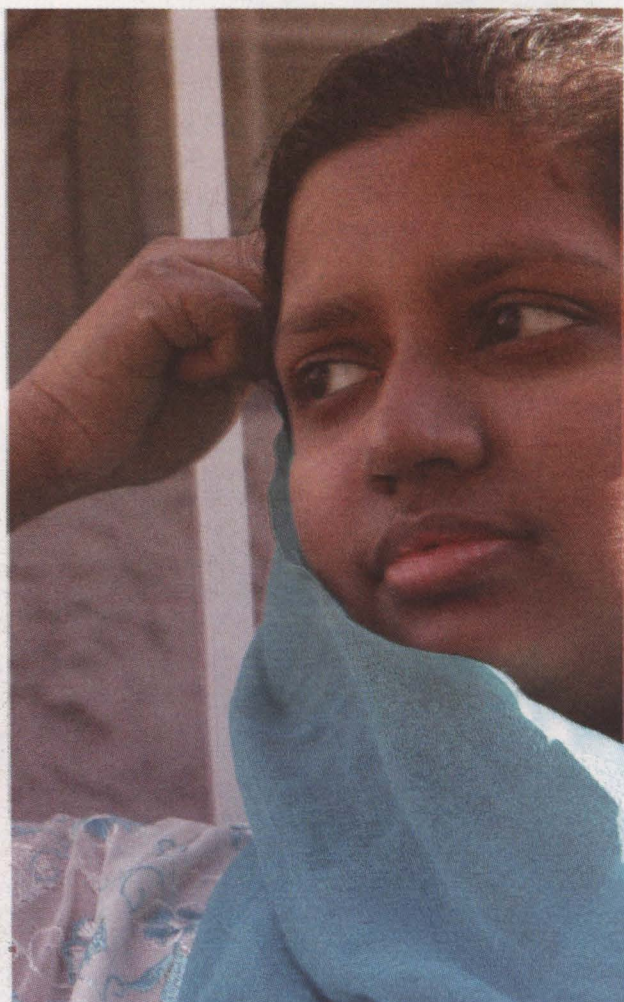
Unfortunately, though, I don't think I'm going to get any of those things as long as I stay in this cursed yuppie hell-pit. I'd be gone today if my parents weren't offering me free room and board while I go to college. Thanks mom and dad...you fucking bastards. Up yours Coquitlam!



FEATURES

Headscarves and Me

By Sajia Kabir, OP Contributor



When I was living in Bangladesh, I would not, for most of the time, have thought of putting on a veil, not even when I was going through my devout reformist Muslim phase.

There would be certain occasions when I would willingly wear the hijab, such as when praying, or when the *azan* (Islamic call to prayer) was being said, or when I was

at a *milad* (Bengali Muslim religious gathering). But I never felt any compulsion to wear the veil all the time.

The only time my mother and her sisters ever wore burkhas was when they were riding the rickshaws to university. Once they got there they would take the burkhas off. My late grandfather was a *maulana* (Islamic scholar) with relatively liberal tendencies, and while he was not strict about *purdah*, he wanted to avoid the disapproving looks of the neighbours.

My mother is a devout Muslim, but she has always looked upon the veil as a form of religious ostentatiousness; her attitude was that you do not need to cover your head to lead a virtuous life. Her attitude is not uncommon among other Bangladeshi middle-upper class Muslim women, who are content simply to wear the *dupatta* (*salwar kameez* scarf) or *aachol* (loose end of sari) so that it covers the breast.

Even when Bangladeshi women do cover their heads, it is more often with the *dupatta* and *aachol* rather than with a burkha or a separate shawl. A favourite pastime of liberal Bangladeshi Muslim women is to sneer at Saudi Arabian rich girls who wear miniskirts under their burkhas. There was much merriment in my family over an aunt of ours who had purchased a couple of fashionable burkhas with lots of embroidery and sequins, which she at the end was unable to wear due to allergies to the nylon from which they were made.

Which is not to say that there isn't a vocal segment of the Muslim populace who pay too much attention to women's supposed need for modest dress. They look longingly to the example in garment legislation set by Saudi Arabia and Iran (although which of the two they admire varies). Some of these people are Muslim women, often college-educated and working outside the home, who believe that the hijab protects the female body from the tyranny of the male gaze. They point to the scarcely utopian state of the West, with its body-image disorders and hypersexualization of teenage girls.

I strongly disagree with this—any study of women's magazines and popular fiction and film in Bangladesh (I cannot speak for the rest of the Muslim world) will show women concerned that they are too dark-skinned, among other possible flaws. Skin color is a *major* factor in the *deshi* marriage market. And it is not necessarily the case that the more Islamicist the girl's family, the less concerned with beauty they are (although the reverse is not invariably true, either).

But while I wouldn't want to wear a burkha myself, except as maybe a postmodern-situational-identifiable gesture of irony during a performance of highly erotically charged feminist songs, I do strongly oppose the steps that the governments of Western Europe are taking to ban the hijab.

Yes, parents are forcing their daughters to wear clothes they do not want to wear. The question people should be asking themselves is, "Is this a domestic dispute that the state has grounds to intervene in?" After all, since the 1960s—actually, probably since earlier than that—teenagers and young adults all over the world have disagreed with their parents and guardians over what clothes they want to wear, and until now the state has rarely stepped in on the side of youth. I realize that there have been serious cases of family abuse over the wearing of the hijab, but these should be dealt with by the social services and the police, not by banning the hijab altogether.

And yet...I would not want to live in a country of compulsory veiling. The practice sexualizes the female body every bit as much as lingerie ads on billboards. The practice promotes the notion that women have only themselves to blame if they are harassed, abused, or raped. Plus, I rather like walking around in shorts during hot spells.

I will fight for women's freedom to wear the veil, but how many of them will fight for my freedom not to wear the veil?

Student Newspapers Satirize Cartoon Controversy

By Tessa Vanderhart, CUP Central Bureau Chief

WINNIPEG (CUP)—Student newspapers across Canada, like media across the world, have had to make tough editorial decisions about the Jyllands-Posten cartoons.

Some, notably the *Strand*, the *Gateway*, and the *Peak*, have chosen to run editorial cartoons on the subject of these highly contentious cartoons. One paper, UPEI's the *Cadre*, even chose to print the original cartoons.

Though it appears that students are understandably divided on the issue, editors of these papers—many of them members of the Canadian University Press—expressed very little regret at what readers of student newspapers across the country have been exposed to in satirical cartoons and editorials.

Nick Ragaz, the managing editor at the *Strand*, the student newspaper of Victoria College at the University of Toronto, explained his newspaper's decision to print a cartoon depicting Jesus kissing Mohammed in the "tunnel of tolerance."

"The question that we had was: do we not publish this? And if not, how do we justify this?" said Ragaz.

The cartoon was a volunteer contribution, passed

along from the University of Toronto's larger student paper, the *Varsity*.

The *Strand* considered the offensive nature of the cartoon but in the end, found "no reasons not to publish" and has received both positive and negative feedback. A letter from the students' union accused the paper of an "act of hate" and concerns have also been voiced by the Muslim students' association on campus.

"Since nobody wants to pull the papers off the stands I don't regret it," he said.

Rather, Ragaz said, the cartoon was published in a genuine effort to promote tolerance, if occasionally misinterpreted.

"We thought about this carefully and were sincere in our expressions of goodwill," Ragaz said.

Both the Canadian Press and the *Toronto Star* have written stories about the *Strand*'s cartoon—the *Star*'s attention was "rewarding," according to Ragaz, while CP termed him "defiant and unapologetic."

But the media attention garnered by the *Strand* doesn't compare with attention paid to the *Cadre*. The University

of PEI student newspaper reprinted the Jyllands-Posten cartoons, the first newspaper in Canada to do so.

Cadre editor-in-chief Ray Keating said that the cartoons were printed under the newspaper's mandate to inform students.

He added that the cartoons were published with the support of the student union, but when the university administration banned distribution of the papers on campus, legal action was threatened. The *Cadre* is owned by the UPEI students' union.

"Once we were censored, then it became a free speech issue," said Keating.

Though they disagree, Keating said the student union and the *Cadre* are still on good terms. Some councillors later expressed a desire to have been consulted before the issues were pulled from the stands.

Daniel Kaszor, the editor-in-chief of the *Gateway* at the University of Alberta, made the editorial decision to publish a cartoon along with an editorial on February 7.

In the *Gateway*'s cartoon, a man in a turban yells, "How dare you say that Muslims are racist? I should kill you for

I found it on
teh interweb!



Iain W. Reeve, Net Stalker

This week's website:

Myspace

Are you lonely? Are you misunderstood? Can nobody relate to the pain and strife that you go through in your day-to-day life? Are you just looking for that special someone who can understand how special, unique, artistic, pained, and talented you are? Do you lie awake at night hoping that person will make it all better? Do you like to take pictures of yourself hiding your eyes, from awkward angles, or in the mirror of your parent's bathroom? Well, as it turns out, you're not special, you fit in perfectly with the upward of 56 million users of the internet's most asinine armpit: MySpace.

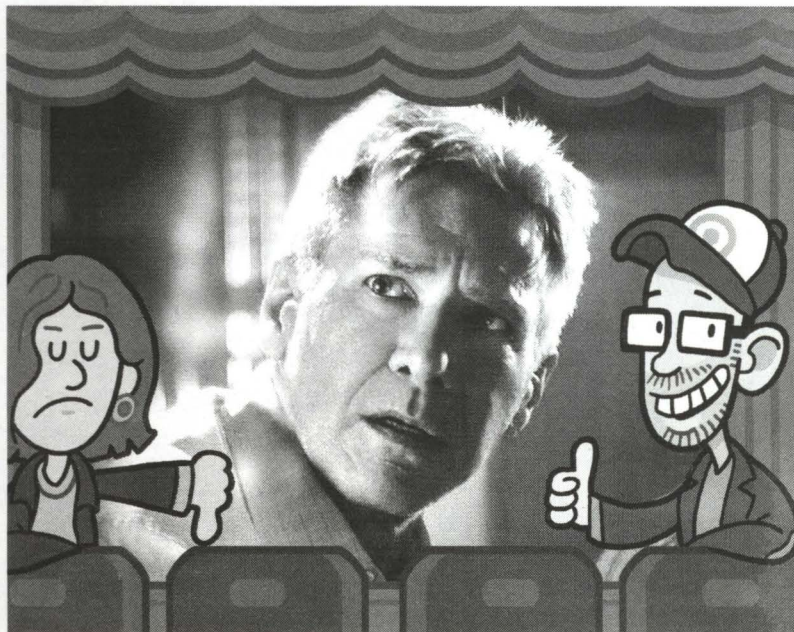
Finding fault with this site is as easy as finding fault with the barely post-puberty, self important, drama queen teens that are its primary inhabitants. The site allows people to customize, from a variety of ugly as sin templates, their own little personal sites. They can include pictures—as long as they are taken from awkward angles and don't show your face, music, lists of favourite movies and bands—the best way to tell if someone is a good match for you, and of course your status. This way creepy Internet trolls can figure out if they can hook up with you or not. Normally this would be kind of creepy, but if you're on MySpace, chances are that's what you're looking for.

Providing several useful purposes, this site has quickly overshadowed other similar services. Thus making it the premier hot spot for child molesters, racist groups, and ugly guys wanting to con sexy girls into meeting them IRL (in real life). Meeting people online has always been dubious, but no site has ever seen such a massive perpetuation of fake identities, misinformation, and ugly people taking pictures of themselves from angles with their faces covered. Yes I keep repeating the picture thing, but seriously, spend ten minutes on the site and you'll know what I mean.

For being home to the desperate, the vain, the escapist, the sexually deviant, and the downright morally bankrupt, MySpace, I salute you. When the worst thing that happens on your site is setting people up for sexual abuse, racial discrimination, and really awkward blind dates, and the best part is allowing teens to create inaccurate, superficial pseudo-identities, you know you're in trouble. Stick to meeting people in your day-to-day life. Say hi to the cute girl at the café, chat up the sexy boy looking in the sociology section of the library. Trust me, the embarrassment or rejection is nothing compared to standing with the rose in your hand at the corner of Granville and Georgia as sexy 22 year old Virginia turns out to be 16, or meeting Versace clad George at the bar to find out he has two kids and a criminal record. Screw you MySpace, keep your angled, ambiguous photos. While I may not be able to tell if a girl is crazy or not by looking at her, at least I can tell if she is really hot and around my age. And that puts me one step ahead of you suckers.

Smith & Reeve at the Movies: Firewall

Iain W. Reeve and Steph Smith, Get Off Our Plane Yellers



Jack Stanfield (Harrison Ford) is totally gooned when a group of techno-thugs take over his house and hold his family ransom. Their demand? Stanfield must help them steal hundreds of millions of dollars from the bank he works at, or they will kill his family. But, as he is played by Harrison Ford, Jack fights back!

Reeve:

Imagine your average bank executive. Imagine his family is abducted and he is forced to help criminals pilfer millions from his bank. What would he do? He would probably cry a little, then proceed to do whatever they told him. Well thankfully Jack, the hero of our story, is no normal banker. As with every Harrison Ford action movie this contains lots of reality stretching plot twists, technological plot holes, gratuitous down and dirty ass-kicking, and a complete lack of any firewalls—except when that car exploded I suppose. But hey, for a formulaic action flick, this is a not-so-bad little piece of film.

Having been a boy growing up in the 80s I am well acquainted with the action film. This would be your category two action film. Rather than having a protagonist who is an omnipotent ultra kill machine a-la Rambo or Terminator, your hero is an embittered everyman with everything to lose. Ford is, of course, in his element here. It may just be because I grew up worshiping Indiana Jones and Han Solo, but this man can do no wrong in my eyes. Where most people could never get away with lines like "Give me back my family!" or "Pack up your shit and get out of here!" I cheered every time the big man pulled out his gruff angry man voice. I would not have wanted to run into him in an alley while he's trying to find his family. And it turns out I could have as this is another movie filmed all over Vancouver with sites from Gastown to Granville St.

The rest of the cast is good enough. Paul Bettany is your classic evil action villain, and his collection of goons have a touch more than the normal amount of personality. The actors playing Jack's family do a good job of being scared and/or angry for two hours, and Robert Patrick was neat as the well-meaning boss who nearly ruins everything. I kept wondering why he didn't start running after cars and smashing through the back window T-1000 style though.

A reasonable amount of suspense, some almost ingenuitous premises, and some non-stop intense performances make this a serviceable action film. If you like Ford's other

films than you'll be at home here. Harrison proves that, even at 63, he is still built Ford tough. His final clumsy siege on the ramshackle cottage is almost worth it alone. As long as you keep pretending he is an old Indiana Jones that is.

Smith:

"Give me back my family." It's just so intense, and especially so coming from Harrison Ford. The trailers looked equally intense. Harrison's eyes filled with rage as he told an unnamed assailant that he wanted his family back. Unfortunately this line does not, I repeat does not, appear in the film. Instead we get the same intensity in the line, "I'm going to get my dog." Not exactly the same calibre, and certainly not to the same effect.

Firewall was your typical no brainer action/kidnapping/bank heist film. Men want money, men blackmail banker to get money, men blackmailing banker kidnap banker's family, banker fights back. The only difference was the man fighting back was Indiana Fucking Jones, not just some schlub on the street.

The movie was disappointing. Suspicious use of invented technology made me disbelieve much of the premise. I highly doubt that you can use a fax scanner to scan the scrolling numbers from a computer screen, store the scans on an iPod, and then, in 5 minutes, transfer that image file into a data file. Wouldn't the scanned numbers be all blurry? Have you ever received a clear fax?

And acting...don't get me started on acting. Harrison Ford was intense as always. Paul Bettany played your typical bad guy. The T-1000 played a character whose point I could not determine. Though I did find myself exclaiming, "Run Indy! The T-1000 gonna get you!" at one point in the film. Worst of the whole lot was the secretary character. Unemotional and more boring than watching my roommates play video games for hours on end, Mary Lyn Rajskub of 24 fame caused me great pain to watch.

I did however find solace in the fact that I could play the game, "where in Vancouver is that?" as the film was made in Vancouver for the most part. A rather blatant shot of the baggage claim at YVR had me in stitches, as it was meant to be Sea-Tac. All in all, this was not a good movie. It was more of the same action crap that always shows up in theatres for a few weeks. Go if you want to see Harrison Ford trying to relive the glory days of Indiana Jones, but don't go if you think it's going to be a good, entertaining movie.

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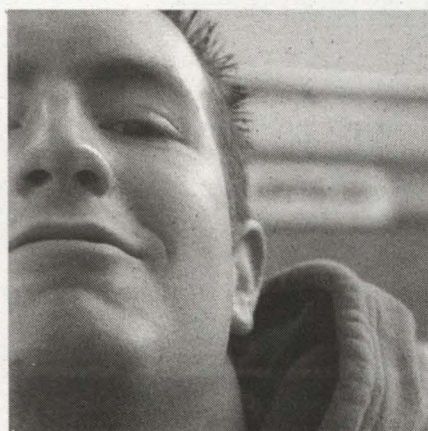
Email: ncinemas@yahoo.ca

Movie Info: 604.526.0332

Website: www.atnynmovie.com

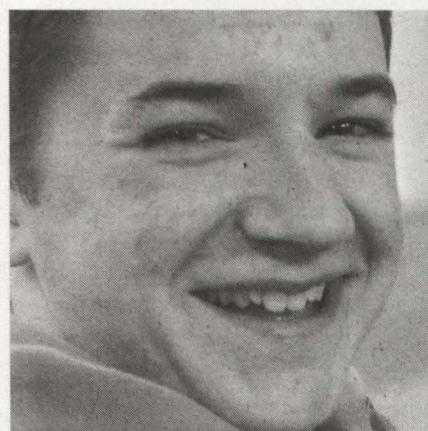
Word On The Street

Question: "Do you give Coquitlam the thumbs up or the thumbs down? Why?"



A: "Thumbs up baby. Coquitlam's the best because it has the hottest girls in the world."

— Calvin



A: "I give it a thumbs up 'cause it's more fresh on this side of the tracks."

— Ali



A: "Thumbs up because of the view, the scenery, the mountains, and it's safe too."

— Beverly and Jenny



A: "Thumbs up because of all the little girlies from Pinetree."

(Someone should put this dude away now before he grows real testicles.)

— Haughty

Student Newspapers Satirize Cartoon Controversy Continued:

that!" in response to: "Freedom of the press means freedom to be a racist chump."

And while Kaszor knew the cartoon itself was somewhat offensive, the *Gateway* received no response from it, except garnering an interview from the *Edmonton Sun*.

"The University of Alberta campus is sort of a strange one, where we can probably get away with murder and no one would notice," said Kaszor.

He explained that the "hyperbolic and sort of crazy" cartoon was clearly satire.

"We haven't really taken a side so much as commented on what was satirized," he said.

William Wolfe-Wylie, the Atlantic Bureau Chief for CUP, writes a weekly commentary for the *Argosy* at Mount Allison University. On February 9 the *Argosy* ran a point/counterpoint on the comics, with no accompanying graphic.

"I still don't think that not publishing the cartoons is a freedom of the press issue. Especially when compared to the 'professional press,' I think student newspapers have more freedom than they would like to admit—we can publish pretty much anything at all and get away with it," said Wolfe-Wylie.

Not only are the original cartoons readily available online, but the issue has become so contentious that Wolfe-Wylie contends that republishing them is less informative than provocative.

"Discussion needs to happen around such a strange cause for global protest," said Wolfe-Wylie; but, he continued, discussion that contributes something more than offence.

"The publication of further cartoons, such as those in the *Strand* and the *Gateway* are a contribution to the debate and are a great idea. If student papers wish to contribute to the debate, then an editorial explaining their stance will go further than further incitement."

Dave Weatherall, the national bureau chief for CUP, said that each paper has to decide

for itself where to stand on the comics.

Still, he noted, there is a reason that student papers have picked up on drawing cartoons themselves.

"The fact that you can write about, but not draw Mohammed probably renders the cartoons more effective," Weatherall said. "A little cartoon is very powerful."

He explained that there is no provision against depicting the Muslim prophet in the Qur'an—but rather, the *Globe and Mail* reported, the tradition evolved from interactions with iconoclastic Christians in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Before circulating the *Gateway's* editorial cartoon to CUP papers through its wire service, Weatherall asked elected regional bureau chiefs what they thought. Slightly more than half recommended that the cartoon be shared.

Dock Currie, the opinions editor at the *Peak* at Simon Fraser University, wanted to run the Jyllands-Posten cartoons, but a last-minute publishing decision led the *Peak* to instead publish a silhouette of a man with a bomb in his turban.

"I don't think it provokes any insightful debate; most of the things about Islamic militancy have been said," Currie opined.

But, he noted, there is still a reason to publish offensive materials in the Western world.

"Legitimate satire shouldn't have to worry about being sanctioned or censored by the internal tenets of any religion, or any 'ism' at all," said Currie.

"Student papers should be running stuff like this; student papers should be ruffling feathers," he said. "If you have autonomy from your [student union] and you're not using it, you're a waste of paper, in my mind."


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Being Chocolate in a Vanilla World

Margaret Matthews, OP Contributor



Prior to my migrating to Canada from a predominantly non-white country, several "well-meaning" seniors gave me unsolicited advice that I was making a big mistake in migrating to a white country, where I would be a victim of racial prejudice and discrimination. They said that I would not have a chance of ever getting married since I was a black female. Their rationalizing was that a white male would not want me, neither would a black male (since they thought that black males seemed to want white females) and that generally speaking, I would be very unhappy and probably die an Old Maid in isolation. (What words of comfort for a high-spirited young lady).

Incidentally, these "friends" had never been to North America, and did not have first-hand knowledge about life in Canada. They had only heard about Blacks being in slavery to their white masters and the inhumane treatment of them. They had also read in US magazines about Lena Horne, Sammy Davis, Jr., and other Black celebrities who had been denied service at restaurants and refused a hotel room in classy hotels.

After weighing the pros and cons, I made my decision to "take the plunge" and face up to the challenges that came my way. I would make the best of the situation, and brush off any racial slurs, discrimination, and anti-social behaviour towards me like water off a duck's back.

During my first year in Canada, I did run into some subtle forms of discrimination, but chose to not let it bother me. If some Whites did not want to associate or socialize with me because of my race and colour, that was their problem. I had no time for them in my life either; I had better things to do.

I was curious about Black history and Black culture and read extensively about the subject. I borrowed *Uncle Tom's Cabin* from the public library and was astounded at the inhumane treatment of the slaves. I was determined to learn more about the subject, and so read every book and article that I could lay my hands on—Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement, Malcolm X, and a host of other civil rights activists.

A book that particularly intrigued me was entitled *Black Like Me*, which was the experience of a white man in the US who dyed the skin on his entire body with a very black ink, wore a wig, and went to live in the southern states posing as a Black male. He defiantly went into the "Whites Only" restaurants, hotels, and other public places to see how the white population would treat him as a Black. He met with negative treatment and discrimination and after about six months or a year of such an experiment went back to his home and took off his disguise and wrote the above book. It's an incredible story of racial hatred and discrimination against Blacks.

Some years ago, a television series, *Roots*, was aired on NBC for several days and I did not miss a single one of the airings. I actually cried when I saw Kunta Kinte, the run-away slave who had his foot cut off by his master so he could not run away again. The sexual harassment of the white plantation owners towards their black female slaves and their illegitimate children shocked and astounded me.

About this time in my sojourns in Canada, there was an influx of "visible minorities" from various parts of the world who arrived as immigrants, and the *Multicultural Act* was passed. Canada accepted immigrants from various parts of the world and treated them with respect and dignity.

Racial discrimination was going out the window gradually as "visible minorities" were dating and intermarrying Whites. During this time, I was asked to go out on dates with White men. One Swiss guy in particular who saw me at a social event took a fancy to me from the start. He came over and got acquainted with me and we went steady for a long time. It turned out that although he was White, he was *only attracted to Black females, and all his previous girlfriends were Black females*. I chuckled when he told me this. I took photos of myself and my Swiss boyfriend and sent them back home to my friends who were astounded that I had broken the ice and defied tradition.

Recently, I took a course in Women's Studies and

Gender Relations. In "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism," black feminist Audre Lorde's response to racism is anger directed towards white women and the system that put themselves in the centre, [and] women of Colour somewhere on the fringe, thus "rendering her invisible" and without a voice to suffer in silence and oppression.

It can, however, be argued that there are a few prominent black females who, having faced the challenges of abuse, poverty, and discrimination, have overcome these obstacles and rose to national recognition.

At the late Rosa Parks' funeral, Oprah Winfrey gave the eulogy on national television. Her comments were that "if it had not been for Rosa Parks' refusal to stand, I would not be standing here today at Capital Hill, among Presidents and other dignitaries and praising her for her heroic act. She was willing to be imprisoned because she fought for a just cause, and refused to give up her seat to someone of the white race."

Another such prominent Black female is the present Attorney General of Canada, Michaelle Jean, who immigrated to Canada with her parents from Haiti as a young girl of eleven. Through hard work and perseverance she overcame her challenges, obtained a University education, worked for CBC as a bilingual television journalist, and eventually was elected and serves faithfully as the Attorney General of Canada.

Perhaps the role model of many a Black female (including myself) is Oprah Winfrey. Her biography, *Oprah Winfrey—the Real Story*, by George Mair, reveals her many struggles since her birth as an illegitimate child, abandoned and abused in the Deep South, her survival and rise to fame, fortune, and national recognition as a living symbol of hope and success. As a child of ten, she sat on her kitchen floor, watched Sidney Poitier receive an Oscar, and determined that if a black male could win an Academy Award, there was hope that some day she might too. Her dreams came true when she grew up and received innumerable awards for her many roles in films and other contributions to society. As a black woman in a business that is dominated by white males, she has made it to the top with remarkable determination and talent, and her assets as a billionaire make her one of the richest and most popular black females in the United States today.

While Audre Lorde and other black feminists are angry and bitter about inequality and injustice towards women of colour, Winfrey in *Oprah on the Slave Mentality*, concurs: "I am more conscious of my legacy as a black person than anybody. There are still a lot of black people who are very angry and bitter...they want me to be just as angry and bitter, and I won't be."

Does a Black female have to despair and lose faith in herself because of the social injustices prevalent around her? Should she not be motivated and ambitious to strive for success to get ahead in life and fulfill her dreams and ambitions? The above black women have proven that the barriers of racism, sexism and classism can be shattered and trodden over, and one can reach the pinnacles of success through hard work, perseverance, and determination. The sky is the limit for those who dare to follow their dream, regardless of whether they are *chocolate or vanilla*.

MEDIUM LARGE *by Francesco Marciuliano*



white ninja

by Scott Bevan



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Gold Rush

Royals looking to strike gold, not oil

Brian McLennon, OP Sports Editor

In their pursuit for an unprecedented 20th National Badminton Championship, the Royals are heading toward Mount Royal College in Calgary, Alberta looking for Gold, not oil.

In Kamloops this past weekend, the Royals were officially crowned the 2006 Provincial Champions. The Royals swept all three league tournaments and recorded the highest point totals in the past two years. Led by singles sensation Lyndsay Thomson, the Women's Singles champion solidified her place as she advanced to the Canadian College's Athletics' Association (CCAA) National Championships tournament by defeating Shao-lin Guo of Capilano.

In addition to Thomson, the Royals will be sending Women's Doubles winners Aki Ito and Alice Lee. The dynamic duo defeated Kylee Arbrahamson and Megan Yim of Malaspina to earn a berth at the national tournament. Also traveling to Calgary will be Alvin Lau and Charmagne Yeung, who took home the gold at the Provincials as they defeated Adrian Liu and Lisa Orlandi of Langara.

After their spectacular performance at the Provincial Championships, both Lau and Yeung were named the BCCAA Athletes of the Week. A graduate from Gladstone Secondary in Vancouver, the freshman Lau is also a member of the BC Provincial team and has been identified by the National Team U-23 talent pool.

Yeung is a graduate of Kwantlen Park Secondary in Surrey and is having an outstanding rookie campaign as an instrumental part of the team's provincial championship.

Playoff Bound

Douglas sends three teams to Provincials

The Douglas Royals' basketball teams and women's volleyball team are bound for the BCCAA Provincial Championships. In an exciting push for playoff positioning and qualification, the last couple of weeks were white knuckles for some while others were just looking for a better playoff position.

Volleyball leading the way

Leading the way in his first year as Head Coach, Ryan Vijandre will be heading to Abbotsford, BC this weekend to compete in the BCCAA Provincial Championships at Columbia Bible College. With six graduating seniors, the Royals are considered potentially "dangerous" as they have proven in the past that they can play with the big girls. They packed the number two nationally ranked Okanagan three straight sets a few weeks back and pushed Capilano to five and four sets two weeks ago.

With a well-balanced team, Vijandre has several options that could push them over the hump in the playoffs. Krista Schmidt, Lauren Stockstad, Lauren Johnston, Michelle Wong, and Ashley and Jayme Greig all represent Douglas in the final league leaders' categories.

The Royals will face the team that they defeated at home this past weekend, the CBC Bearcats. Should the nationally ranked (15) Royals play as well as they did against the Bearcats, they would face the number three ranked team in the nation, Malaspina. However, with CBC

having the home crowd advantage, the Royals will need to approach this match one set at a time.

The playoff action begins this Thursday, March 23, 2006. Royals vs. CBC at 6:30pm.

Basketball

Both the men's and women's basketball teams have a big challenge ahead of them for the BCCAA Provincial Championships, March 2-4, 2006, at Malaspina University in Nanaimo, BC.

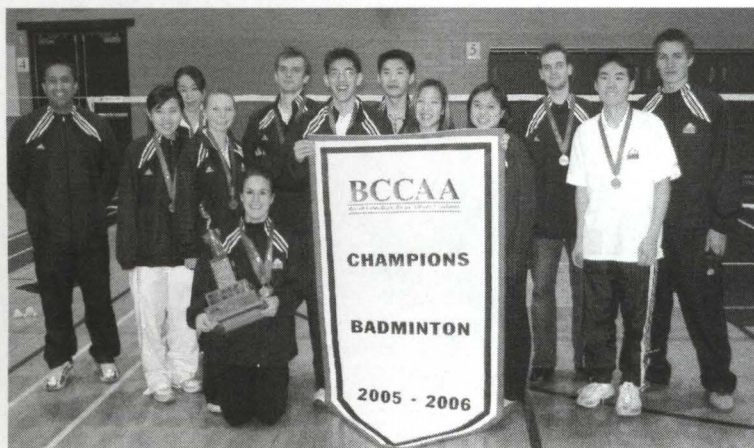
Both teams finished the regular league with identical .500 records (9-9), however, the men managed to secure the fifth seed in the playoffs rankings, while the women grabbed the final position and will enter the tournament as the sixth seed.

Women's Basketball: Six of one, half dozen of another

Trust me when I say, the Women's basketball team is no ordinary six seeded team. With a handful of experienced players, coach Ed Lunn should feel confident heading into next week's Provincials.

"I feel good about our chances," said Lunn. "We have had good games against Langara this season and we were able to get a split in the series." The women's team has shown flashes of brilliance at times, with a complete shopping list of players at all positions. Lunn may have the right recipe by the final taste testing.

The Royals are solid, and it all starts with 3rd-year guard Tara McNeill running the show. McNeill has a great perimeter shooter in Megan Lowrie to "kick it out to" when she drives the lane, or she can take it solo or drop a



dime to 'G-Dub' (Gillian Weinrath), who has shown that she can take over a game as she did against UNBC. If all else fails...Bridget "get out the way" O'Brien can inflict some serious damage. If you haven't seen the movie *Cinderella Man*, then you can watch this "take a lickin' and keep on tickin'" gal play...she's tough.

The Royals will need that toughness against a strong and talented Langara Falcons team that is seeded number three in the tourney and tenth in the nation.

Beside the O'Brien, Lowrie, and McNeill, the Royals' cupboards are not bare. Patti Olsen has done an outstanding job in her freshman year, along with sophomore, Megan 'Mini' McKenna. Heidi Padijen and Sarah Josefson also have provided some solid play to allow others to get a breather.

"Our bench could play a major role," said Lunn. "We need everyone to bring their best game next weekend."

Men's Basketball: Return of the Jedi: Obi-Wan-Keno "Oei"

Head coach Jamie Oei is heading back to the BCCAA Provincials Championships...again. In his first year at the wheel, the talented coach will return to the madness of March as a head coach. The young coach is a bit of a Jedi in the coaching circles, as many know that he has a knack for getting the most out of what he's got in order to make something happen. With a Jabba the Hut Jambalaya-like roster resulting from a late hire last year, Oei had the force with him in the first half, as the team was sitting in first place after five weeks with a 5-0 record.

In second half of the season, the Royals faltered as they lost their first three weekends after the break. However, key wins over UNBC a few of weeks ago and CBC this past weekend helped to keep the Royals' heads above water. In their first round playoff game against their cross-bridge rivals, the Capilano College Blues, the Royals will look to avenge the two earlier losses in which the Blues slipped through with narrow victories.

The Royals will rely heavily on centre-forward Cody Berg for points in the paint due to the sudden loss of potential all-star forward, Jon Thomson. Thomson, our thoughts are with you. Help for the Royals will come with the savvy play of Clayton Heuring.

The hulking swing forward, is not your typical swing forward. The Maple Ridge Secondary graduate has opened the eyes of spectators and critics alike with his "men's league-like" quick thinking and his ability to stroke it from behind the three-point line. Just getting into form, the sophomore has provided the Royals with another punch from the outside, while also providing some size on the inside for defending.

In addition to the vets Cody Berg, Craig Green, James Anderson, and Geoff "Rudy" Lenahan, who had a career evening at CBC scoring 13 points and grabbing three rebounds, the rookies better take note...this is the BCCAA playoffs. The Royals will need strong minutes from players like Kelly Kilpatrick and Jevon Boyde-Joseph, who have come on strong in the second half of the season.

Capilano has historically played a fast tempo game. Their track meet style of play forces teams into making mistakes, which they can capitalize on with their transition offense. I doubt next weekend will be different. Royals' guards Green and Rogers better be prepared to take care of the ball.

"We'll need to get back on transition defense and take care of the ball," said junior guard, Craig Green. "We [also] need to control Ufford's [Chris] perimeter shooting."

The Blues boast the best "dime dropping" back court in the league, with McLaren [Brent] and Fadl-Alla [Saad]. With each averaging five assist a game, which only means one thing...someone is scoring a bunch of points for the Blues. Enter Aleksic Nebojsa. The daunting forward is the Blues leading scorer and is third in the league scoring averaging 17 points per game and 7.5 rebounds per game.

The Royals will need to contain this versatile player who can hit from the behind the three point arch and post you down low; add Justin Van Loo to the mix, and the Royals could have their hands full.

So, with his first appearance in years, Jedi Jamie Oei will be looking to create something special again as he prepares his troops for battle. May the force be with you.

Men's Rugby**Royals Squeeze Seattle****Dave Pearcey, OP Contributor**

A counter-attack from deep in their own territory saw the ball pass through several hands before winger Brian McCatyn touched down for Royals' (10-6).

With about five minutes to go, Seattle scored a pushover try to regain the lead by one. The home side kept pressing, and after a penalty inside the Seattle 22, centre Brock Ansley drove through the tough Seattle defense to score near the posts. Tim Phillips converted and seal the victory.

2nd Division: Douglas 55 - Seattle 10

After a good start, Royals poured it on in the 2nd half. Try scorers included Kenji Miazaki (3), Paul Bovell (2), Greg Doucette, MattArniell, and Can Fraser.

3rd Division: Douglas 17 - Scribes 30

A 17-8 halftime lead evaporated as the veterans from the Scribes took over in the 2nd half and scored 22 unanswered points.

Women's Rugby**Douglas Blast Past Bayside****Premier: Douglas 41 - Bayside 7**

The Royals came up against a very determined Bayside team and played well in spurts to come away with the victory. Melissa Klein scooped up an errant Bayside pass to ramble 40 metres for the first try of the game. Soon after, Candace Barry chased down a long kick that eluded three Bayside defenders and dished off to Klein before receiving a return pass to score under the posts.

Good ball movement off a quickly taken penalty sent Alicia Noger in to put Royals up 19-0 at the half. Bayside played it tough in the 2nd half and continually won ball from loose play. After winger April Jones increased the lead to 24-0, Bayside were finally rewarded with a try by centre Cindy Yoc. The conversion brought the score to 24-7.

This seemed to inspire the Royals, as they counted 17 points in the last 15 minutes. Tries came from Klein, Corinne Jacobson, and Barry. Kari Horntvedt counted three converts on the day.

1st Division: Douglas 12 - UVIC 27

Short-staffed but game, the Royals' 1st division ladies took an early lead but could not hold off a very fit and well-disciplined University of Victoria team.

Karli Coupland and 2nd division call-up Kelly Peterson scored tries, with Peterson adding one conversion.

2nd division: Douglas 17 - UNBC 0

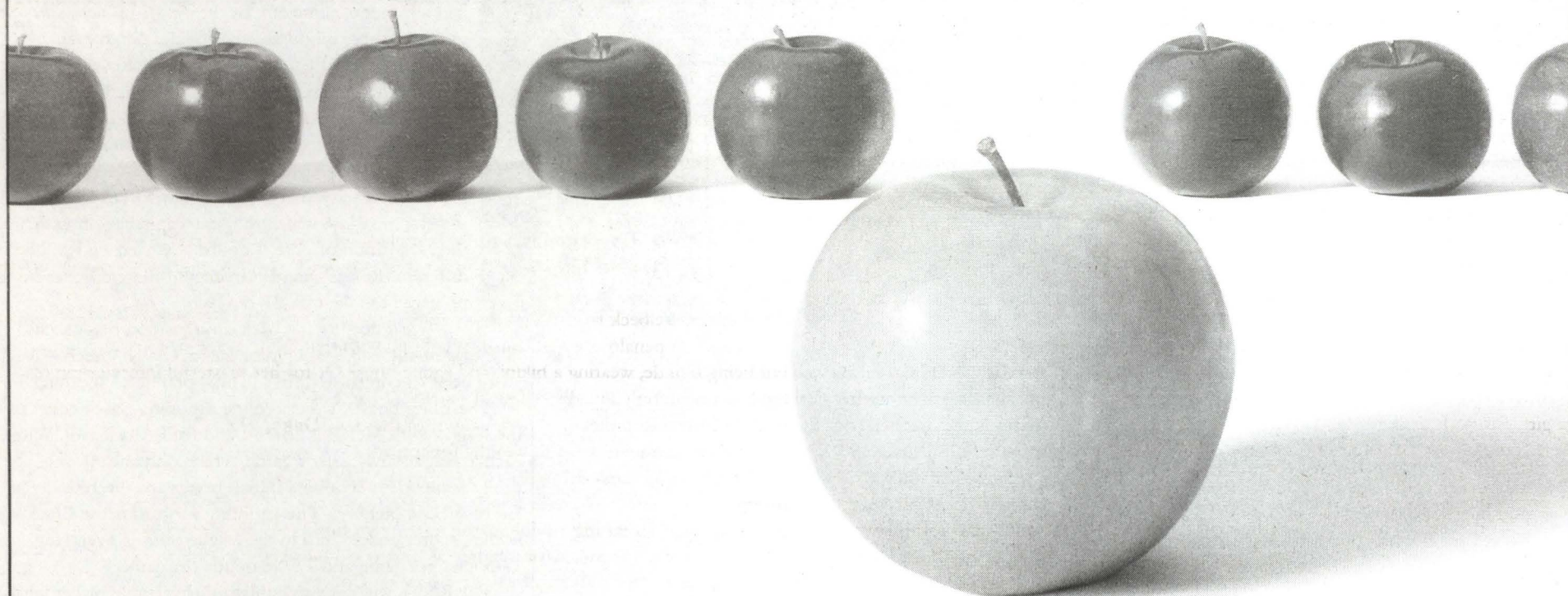
The 2nd division women hosted the University of Northern BC from Prince George in an exhibition match and came away with the win on tries by Rikkilee Jones (2) and Sarah Duncan.

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Last Call

Amanda Aikman, OP Columnist



It's Oscar season, and I've got celebrities on the brain. Not in the "who's going to win for best adapted screenplay" kind of way, more in the "I wonder who Scarlett Johansson will wear" kind of way.

Ah celebrities. As long as there's a popstar's boob to inadvertently expose and underage girls for R&B singers to videotape, celebrities' antics will continue to disgust and entertain us regular folk. And while I may never experience the lifestyles of the rich and infamous first-hand, that doesn't mean I can't pretend. And so, I present to you, my "Celebrity I would most like to..." list.

Celebrity I would most like to get it on with: Sean Penn and/or Gabriel Byrne.
No, they aren't fresh-faced young pups from the Orlando Bloom school of hotties—but they do both have that haggard, mysterious bastard (with a heart) quality. I love a man who can take a punch as well as a drink.

Celebrity I would least like to get it on with: 50 Cent.
While I admire the fine-tuned literary sensibilities exhibited when rhyming "club" with "rub," I wouldn't have the first idea how to accessorize a bulletproof vest.

Celebrity I'd most like to be friends with: Maggie Gyllenhaal and Philip Seymour Hoffman.

Maggs would lend me all her cool clothes, and PSH would make the three of us laugh with his clever, sarcastic repartee. What a team we'd be!

Celebrity I'd least like to be friends with: Sofia Coppola
She's a cool, smart, talented, beautiful, chic Oscar winner, who just happens to belong to

one of Hollywood's most respected royal families. Who needs the competition?

Celebrity I'd most like to see beaten to death with a tire iron. Okay, maybe not to death...

Elisabeth Hasselbeck from *Survivor* and *The View*. Oh, how I dislike this woman. She's pro-life, pro-death penalty and pro-Bush. What's up with that? Why is she famous, anyway? For being blonde, wearing a bikini, and eating bugs? Or for her masterful interviewing of Lindsay Lohan on some obnoxious daytime-TV hagfest?

Celebrity I'd least like to see beaten to death... Dakota Fanning.

Sure, she's precocious and too wealthy for someone her age, but c'mon, she's just a kid.

Celebrity I'd most like to have as a parent: David Lynch

Imagine, if you can, what Christmas Eve at the Lynch house would be like? Or Halloween? Or the fourth of July? Yeah, you might find yourself in need of therapy, but with a successful filmmaker for a father, at least you'd be able to afford it.

Celebrity I'd least like to have as a parent: Courtney Love.

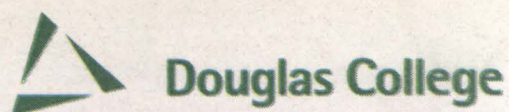
Raiding her medicine cabinet and laughing at her pathetic public displays of insanity would be pretty fun—but it might get a little old if she were your mother. Plus you'd have to have that whole "Why'd you kill Daddy?" conversation, which could be awkward.

Celebrity world I'd most like to live in: Sex and the City.

The clothes, the shoes, the drinks, the sex—what's not to like?

Celebrity world I'd least like to live in: The O.C.

I could just imagine the O.C. girls when they saw me. "Who's the new chick with the cheap handbag?" they'd ask, "And what's she doing with that food...oh my God, I think she's swallowing it!"



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